

I oppose media concentration!

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, the Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In promoting its supposed goals of fair competition, diversity and local voice in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of the huge, dominant companies and players in the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate, or even attempt to demonstrate, the negative effects that media deregulation and consolidation have had on the diversity of our media. While there may indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented has been severely limited.

The right to conduct an informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was renewed in the marketplace of diverse ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge and consolidate further, our ability to have an open, informed discussion from a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

I urge the FCC to preserve the public interest by keeping the media ownership rules in question intact.

Also, I support the FCC's plan to hold a public hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA in February of 2003. I strongly encourage the Commission to hold similar hearings in all parts of the country and solicit the widest possible participation from the public. The rarified, lawyerly atmosphere of an FCC rulemaking is not an appropriate decision-making venue when questions as profound as the freedom of our media are at stake. I encourage the Commissioners to come out and meet some of the people who do not have a financial interest in this issue, but a social interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is important that the Commission take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

I listen to a lot of talk radio, or at least I used to, but I have heard the result of deregulation on the radio industry. Instead of having a diverse set of views to listen to I now have basically no choice. I can listen to very-conservative or ultra-conservative. In all of Pittsburgh, there is exactly one liberal show on radio, a local show on a small talk/news station. There are no nationwide liberal shows at all but I can name numerous conservative ones that play in Pittsburgh (Limbaugh, Oriely, Regan, ...). Is this because there is no audience or because the few groups controlling the majority of radio chose to have it this way, in their lust to get only the biggest dollar amount. They aren't there to serve the public (which is what the FCC claims they are trying to make sure is done with the PUBLIC airwaves), they are only there to make as much money as they possibly can.

And the same is true of music radio. When I first moved to Pittsburgh, I didn't like any of the music choices available to me on the radio. Then two alternative music stations started in town. But the worse of the two was owned by a bigger company, so they simply bought the better station

and converted it to "light jazz." No problem with competition any longer. Now I don't even listen to music radio because there isn't a station I can stand.

I have no doubt that the same will happen to TV and that the FCCs motivation for allow it to happen is simply money. They are no longer serving the public trust. I beg you to prove me wrong and not allow this change to happen.

Thank you,

Thomas Wagner  
2505 Penn Ave, Floor 2  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222